



# **Strategic Workforce Plan 2008 - 2010**

December 2008

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# I. OVERVIEW and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) mission is to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, and related issues based upon sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.*

USDA is a diverse, complex organization with programs that touch the lives of all Americans, every day, through more than 300 programs worldwide, leveraging an extensive network of Federal, State, and Local cooperators. USDA carries out its mission through a workforce of more than 100,000 Federal employees, including a permanent workforce of approximately 90,000, and a temporary workforce of approximately 22,000. USDA's temporary workforce fluctuates in number significantly during the year, such as during the fire season when additional firefighters are employed. An additional 9,400 non-Federal employees located in county offices throughout the Nation assist in carrying out USDA's mission by servicing local agricultural producers.

USDA employees serve in a vast range of occupations, represented by approximately 340 job series, in all counties and states in the United States and in over 50 foreign countries.

In carrying out its mission and achieving its goals, *USDA's human capital* – its employees – is clearly its greatest asset.

USDA must be able to recruit and retain a top-quality workforce to maintain its high level of service to the American people and the world. The Department must also

continue to employ a highly competent and diverse staff to support its scientific and technical programs and to address its administrative, financial, acquisition, and business management responsibilities.



Human capital issues present some of the greatest challenges to achieving USDA's mission and goals. A rapidly growing retirement eligible workforce compels USDA to design and implement a multi-faceted approach to leadership succession and workforce planning that will ensure the existence of talent pools and bench strength sufficient to close leadership and mission critical occupation (MCO) hiring and competency gaps. The challenge of an aging workforce is exacerbated both by an increase in competition for skilled employees, as well as by an increasingly technical environment. Demands for expertise in information technology, public health, and science-based technologies require continual attention to developing and implementing increasingly effective recruitment, training, retention, and knowledge transfer strategies.

## USDA'S STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLAN

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Within USDA, each agency is responsible for workforce planning, with overall guidance and assistance provided by the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM). The *USDA Strategic Workforce Plan* provides an overview and analysis of USDA's current workforce. The plan identifies the various initiatives designed to address immediate and short-term future workforce challenges. The plan builds upon the 2003-2007 *Workforce Restructuring Plan* and serves as a transitional plan for the period 2008-2010. As the Department's strategic direction changes, so too, will its strategic workforce plan through periodic updates to align with the Department's strategic direction.

## USDA'S STRATEGIC GOALS

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When USDA was founded by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862, more than half of the Nation's population lived and worked on farms. Since that time, USDA's role has evolved significantly. Today, USDA improves the Nation's economy and quality of life by enhancing economic opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers; ensuring a safe, affordable, nutritious, and accessible food supply; caring for public lands and helping people care for private lands; supporting the sound, sustainable development of rural communities; expanding global markets for agricultural and forest products and services; and working to reduce hunger and improve American's health through proper nutrition. America's food and fiber producers operate in a global, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and highly competitive business environment driven by sophisticated consumers.

Although diverse and complex, USDA remains one organization committed to the following six strategic goals:

1. Enhance international competitiveness of American agriculture;
2. Enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of rural and farm economies;
3. Support increased economic opportunities and improved quality of life in rural America;
4. Enhance protection and safety of the Nation's agriculture and food supply;
5. Improve the Nation's nutrition and health; and
6. Protect and enhance the Nation's natural resource base and environment.

***Although diverse and complex, USDA remains one organization committed to six strategic goals.***

## USDA'S STRATEGIC HUMAN CAPITAL PLAN

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USDA's *Strategic Human Capital Plan* supports the Department's strategic goals by establishing human capital goals and mechanisms for measuring success in meeting the overall Department goals.

USDA has five strategic Human Capital goals:

1. The Department's human capital management strategies are aligned with the Department's mission, goals, and organizational objectives and integrated into strategic plans, performance plans, and budgets;
2. The Department's leaders and managers effectively manage people, ensure continuity of leadership, and sustain a learning environment that drives continuous improvements;
3. The Department has closed skills, knowledge, and competency gaps/deficiencies in mission-critical occupations and has made meaningful progress toward closing skills, knowledge, and competency gaps/deficiencies in all agency occupations;
4. The Department has a diverse, results-oriented, high-performing workforce and a performance management system that differentiates between high and low levels of performance and links individual/team/unit performance to organizational goals and desired results effectively; and
5. The Department's human capital management decisions are guided by a data-driven, results-oriented planning and accountability system.

## USDA'S DECENTRALIZED ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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USDA's accomplishes its mission and achieves its strategic goals with overall guidance from the Secretary of Agriculture, Assistant Secretaries, senior policy officials, and staff offices. USDA programs are delivered through seven mission areas, led by Under Secretaries. USDA's seven mission areas are:

**Natural Resources and Environment** – The Natural Resources and Environment mission area consists of the *Forest Service* and the *Natural Resources Conservation Service*. These agencies work to ensure sustainable management of both public and private lands. The Forest Service manages 192 million acres of National Forests and Grasslands for the American people. The National Resources Conservation Service assists farmers, ranchers, and other private landowners in managing their acreage for environmental and economic sustainability. Both agencies work in partnership with Tribal, State, and Local Governments, communities, and other Federal agencies to protect the Nation's soils, watersheds, and ecosystems.

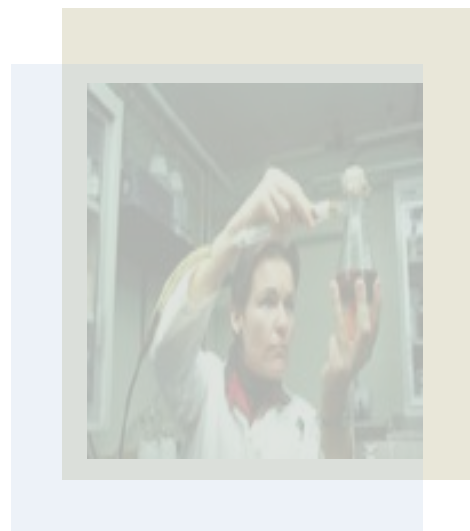
**Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services** – The Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services mission area consists of the *Farm Service Agency* which delivers the most traditional farm

programs, the *Foreign Agricultural Service*, which assists with U.S. agricultural exports, and the *Risk Management Agency*, which manages programs that assist farmers and ranchers weather the unavoidable challenges inherent in agriculture, such as natural disasters. This mission area also includes two Government-owned corporations. The *Commodity Credit Corporation* is the financial mechanism by which agricultural commodity, credit, export, conservation, disaster, and emergency assistance is provided, thereby stabilizing farm income and prices to ensure an adequate, affordable supply of food and fiber. The *Federal Crop Insurance Corporation* improves the economic stability of agriculture through a sound system of crop insurance.

**Rural Development** – The Rural Development mission area consists of the *Rural Utilities Service*, the *Rural Housing Service*, and the *Rural Business and Cooperative Service* and focuses on creating economic opportunities and improving the quality of life in rural America. From rural infrastructure projects that finance the delivery of everything from safe running water to high-speed Internet access to housing programs and economic development initiatives, this mission area unites a variety of valuable programs that, together, comprise the backbone of Federal efforts to ensure rural communities are full participants in economic and other community opportunities.

**Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services** – The Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Service mission area consists of the *Food and Nutrition Service*, which administers Federal nutrition programs and the *Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion*, which provides science-based dietary guidance to the Nation. USDA's Federal nutrition assistance programs include the Food Stamp Program, Child Nutrition Programs, such as school lunches, and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children. These programs provide vital access to nutritious food and support for better dietary habits for one in five Americans. USDA's nutrition research and promotion efforts aid all Americans by linking cutting-edge scientific research to the nutritional needs of consumers.

**Food Safety** – The Food Safety Mission Area consists of the *Food Safety and Inspection Service*, which ensures the safety, wholesomeness, and correct labeling and packaging of meat, poultry, and egg products. The Food Safety and Inspection Service establishes public health performance standards for food safety, and inspects and regulates meat, poultry, and egg products in interstate and international commerce, including imported products. This mission area has significant responsibilities coordinating efforts among various Federal agencies, including the Department of Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency.



**Research, Education, and Economics** – The Research, Education, and Economics mission area brings together all of the efforts underway throughout USDA to advance a safe, sustainable, and competitive U.S. food and fiber system through science and the translation of science into real-world results. The mission area consists of the *Agricultural Research Service*, the *Cooperative State*

*Research, Education and Extension Service, the Economic Research Service, the National Agricultural Library, and the National Agricultural Statistics Service.*

**Marketing and Regulatory Programs** – The Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area consists of the *Agricultural Marketing Service*, the *Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service*, and the *Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration*. This mission area facilitates the domestic and international marketing of U.S. agricultural products, including food and fiber, livestock, and grain through a wide variety of efforts, including the development of national and international agricultural trade standards via Federal, State, and International cooperation. This mission area also conducts increasingly critical and sophisticated efforts to protect U.S. agriculture from plant and animal health-related threats, and ensures the humane treatment of animals.

In addition to the seven mission areas, described above, USDA's structure is augmented by staff offices which provide centralized leadership, coordination, and support for overall policy and administrative functions. Staff offices support the operations of the mission area agencies, enabling these agencies to maximize their time, energy, and resources to the delivery of services to USDA customers and stakeholders.

## **DEPARTMENTAL HUMAN CAPITAL LEADERSHIP**

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OHCM, under the Assistant Secretary for Administration, provides USDA's overall human capital policy direction. OHCM works collaboratively with the mission-area offices to ensure that human capital initiatives are implemented on a Department-wide basis.

USDA offers a variety of career opportunities and has enjoyed great success in attracting exceptional talent to the Department. Even so, the pipeline of potential employees possessing the requisite education and skills necessary for USDA's 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace is continually challenged. Bureau of Labor statistics state that current population and demographic trends will result in fewer employees in the largest segments of the workforce – ages 35 to 54. Additionally, the current Federal workforce is aging with an increasing percentage of employees eligible for retirement each year.

Identifying and implementing effective strategies to retain key workers, as well as recruit new workers who have current and needed skills, is critical for each USDA mission area. It is for this reason that USDA is committed to a strategic, proactive, and aggressive approach to addressing its workforce issues.



## USDA'S WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS

### Highlights from Fiscal Year 2007

Table 1

Occupation, Employment Status and Location			
Number of Occupational Series			340
Number of employees			103,250
Permanent full-time			81.6%
Permanent part-time and other			1.4%
Temporary full-time			10.8%
Temporary part-time and other			6.2%
Located in the D.C. area			12.0%
Supervisors and Managers 1/			14.0%
	All	Non-SES Supervisors	SES
	Percent of Permanent Employees		
Diversity 2/			
Women	43.6	28.0	24.5
Black	11.0	7.6	8.5
Hispanic	6.0	6.0	3.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.8	2.8	3.5
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	2.4	2.7	<1
Total Minority	22.2	19.0	16.9
Veterans 4/	11.9	16.4	27.2
Disabled	6.9	5.3	2.8
Education			
Bachelor's or higher	51.8	68.7	91.7
Master's or higher	14.3	16.8	51.5
Length of Service			
20 years or less	65.3	49.4	35.1
21-30 years	25.3	35.4	35.8
31 or more years	9.4	15.1	29.1
Retirement Eligibility 3/			
FY 2008 - FY 2010	26.4	36.3	62.8
Age Categories			
30 years or less	10.2	3.2	<1
31 – 40 years	18.2	15.3	7.2
41 – 49 years	26.0	27.5	11.5
50 – 59 years	36.9	44.6	51.7
60 and above	8.7	9.3	29.3
1/ Supervisor and Managers includes SES.			
2/ Diversity statistics can be compared to the following respective Civilian Labor Force and Relevant Civilian Labor Force Rates: Women 45.7% and 43.9%; Blacks 10.1% and 17.8%; Hispanics 13.3% and 7.8%; Asian/Pacific Islander 4.3% and 5.3%; American Indian/Alaska Native .7% and 2.0%.			
3/ Retirement Eligible data is cumulative for FY 2008-2010.			
4/ Veterans' percentages are based upon the current FY.			

- USDA's workforce consists of approximately 103,250 individuals, including permanent, seasonal, and intermittent workers in 340 occupational series.
- Female employees account for 43.6% of permanent employees, 28% of Non-SES supervisors and managers, and 24.5% of SES employees.
- Minority employees account for 22.2% of permanent employees, 19% of Non-SES supervisors and managers, and 16.9% of SES employees.
- USDA employees are well-educated with 51.8% of all employees having a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 51.5% of SES having a Master's or higher.
- Approximately 26.4% of the permanent USDA workforce is eligible to retire by FY 2010. Of this, 36.3% are non-SES supervisors and managers, and 62.8% are SES.
- Employees aged 50 and over account for 45.6% of the permanent workforce and 81% of SES.



## KEY STRATEGIES

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Through its Strategic Human Capital goals and the following workforce planning strategies, USDA strives to attract and retain a highly skilled, diverse workforce:

### **Recruitment and Retention**

USDA's primary recruitment and retention goals focus on filling *mission critical occupations* within the mission areas. Recruitment strategies within the USDA Agencies include: promoting the widespread use of technological advances to enhance recruitment efforts and streamline application processes; identifying and modeling "best practices" of Department-wide recruitment strategies, particularly those for diversity initiatives; utilizing recruitment, relocation, and retention bonuses to attract and retain the best employee candidates; and increasing the use of Federal employment authorities such as the *Federal Career Intern Program* and *Presidential Management Intern Program*. Appendix A provides additional information relating to USDA's recruitment and retention strategies.

### **Succession Planning and Leadership Development**

USDA's succession planning and leadership development goals reflect a commitment to training and developing the USDA workforce with a focus on sustaining a learning environment that drives continuous performance improvement. As such, USDA developed a *Strategic Leadership Development Plan* (SLDP) to address future resource gaps. The SLDP identifies key leadership competencies; assesses competency skill gaps and current bench strength (particularly for mission critical occupations); and sets forth strategies that USDA will employ to meet its 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce challenges. The SLDP not only identifies targeted positions and key leadership competencies, it identifies recruitment and development strategies. Such strategies include enhancing communication and human capital planning by incorporating results from annual employee surveys and identifying and preparing succession candidate pools of General Schedule (GS) 14/15 employees to increase bench strength for leadership positions through participation in various leadership programs, including USDA's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (CDP), USDA's Graduate School Leadership programs, and OPM's Federal Executive Institute. Appendix B identified various strategies USDA Agencies are implementing in support of furthering the Department's succession planning and leadership development goals.

### **Diversity and Equal Opportunity**

USDA is committed to workforce diversity and equal opportunity in its employment processes. The Department has made significant progress in retaining a highly-skilled workforce that reflects the public it serves. USDA has continuously improved minority representation in its workforce during the past five years and continues to make progress with respect to attracting and retaining disabled employees and other targeted groups in the workforce. Strategies include strengthening long-term partnerships with academia and professional associations as well as improving USDA's relationship with 1890 Historically Black Land Grant Institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions, American Indian Institutions, and institutions with large numbers of Asian and Pacific Islander students. USDA also continues to promote formal career enhancement opportunities for employees in underrepresented groups and requires diversity awareness training for all employees.

More specifically, USDA sponsors the E. (Kika) de la Garza Fellowship program that offers faculty and staff from Hispanic Servicing Institutions (HSI) the opportunity to work collaboratively with USDA to gain insight and understanding of the Federal government. This uniquely tailored experience brings together HSI staff and Federal executives to address the spectrum of challenges faced in the development of a well prepared Hispanic workforce. Fellows are highly-accomplished faculty members who are selected for the compatibility of their research interests with USDA mission areas and the value their experience with USDA would add to their institution's curriculum.

USDA's also creates partnerships with the HSIs through its HSI Liaison Officers. Each liaison is assigned approximately 40 institutions through which they assist students, faculty, and staff in accessing USDA educational and employment programs. Through campus visits, presentations, e-mails, word of mouth, and referrals, they are able to network with students, faculty, and staff. Liaison Officers raise the awareness of USDA and other Federal opportunities available to the students and institutions. This "personal touch" approach has been instrumental in creating systemic awareness of the opportunities available and the means to utilize them.

USDA also sponsors an 1890 National Scholars Program which offers scholarships to U.S. citizens who are seeking a bachelor's degree at one of the seventeen Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions and Tuskegee University to study agriculture, food, or natural resource sciences and related majors. The program helps to strengthen the partnership between USDA and the 1890 institutions, helps to increase the number of students studying agriculture and related disciplines, and offers career opportunities at USDA. Each award provides annual tuition, employment, employee benefits, use of a laptop computer, printer, and software while on scholarship, fees (lab and activity), books, and room & board for each of the four academic years. Each annual scholarship renewal is contingent upon satisfactory performance and normal progress toward the bachelor's degree. Upon completion of the scholar's academic degree program, there is an obligation of one year of service at USDA for each year of financial support.

### **Performance Management**

USDA's commitment to a results-oriented, high performance workforce that provides the highest quality of service to the American public is reflected by the Department's establishment of a uniform performance management system. USDA's performance management system focuses on attaining an effective linkage between performance and agency mission, goals, and outcomes. The system employs specific strategies to establish a performance culture that fosters high levels of employee engagement; and promotes strong collaboration between and among supervisors, employees, and peers in order to build strong networks and develop a performance-driven culture. Strategies for performance management include strengthening collaboration among supervisors, employees, and peers; increasing competency and skill levels that are marketable, transferable, and that can be leveraged within the organization; and improving the capacity to measure workforce performance and employee contributions.

### **Workforce Planning**

In 2008, OHCM convened an inter-agency working group of OHCM staff, Agency Human Resources (HR) Officers, and HR Specialists to review and provide input into USDA's workforce plan. USDA continues to strengthen workforce planning and expand the use of

workforce data as a basis for developing human capital strategies. Key strategies for improving workforce planning include refining and enhancing USDA's workforce analysis and planning tools and processes; sponsoring annual workforce planning workshops for USDA agencies; and updating a Department-wide workforce planning policy directive to include guidance consistent with OPM workforce planning requirements.

It is important to recognize that externalities affect workforce planning. For USDA, the recent passage of the 2007 Farm Bill will have far-reaching impact on agency workforce planning, particularly its hiring needs. As a result, hiring projections were not included in this workforce plan to provide agencies the opportunity to assess the Farm Bill's long-term impact on their respective workforces. Hiring projections will be included with the next plan update, in order to address a longer-term workforce strategy.

## **II. ORGANIZATIONAL RESTRUCTURING**

USDA agencies continue to optimize their operational structures to improve overall program efficiency and effectiveness. The primary focus of organizational restructuring efforts at USDA is on the largest agencies, including the Forest Service (FS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Rural Development (RD). Restructuring efforts within each of these agencies are highlighted below:

### **FOREST SERVICE**

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FS is committed to increasing efficiencies by reducing the operating costs of the Washington Office and regional offices. A benchmark for success is a 25% reduction in operating costs by 2010, from the 2006 funding level. To accomplish this, the Agency has initiated a realignment effort in the top tiers of the Agency, primarily focusing on the Washington Office, regional offices, and Northeastern Area (WO/RO/Area). A Transformation Management Team, with executive oversight from the regional forester is leading the effort.

In FS's Human Resources Business Process Reengineering (BPR), efforts were made to centralize and automate human capital management (HCM) functions at the Administrative Service Center, Human Capital Management (ASC/HCM) in Albuquerque, NM. Currently, FTE reductions have been realized as HR personnel have been centralized into the new ASC. Minor adjustments are in progress, but to a large extent the anticipated cost savings have been realized. The estimated annual cost savings of \$31.8 million per year will result mostly from agency-wide FTE reductions that are achieved through automation, improved service to employees, and better management of human capital consistent with the President's Management Agenda (PMA). The estimated one-time investment cost for the implementation of the new HCM organization is \$59.7 million.

Stage 1 (FY 2006) accomplishments include:

- 1) 1) Redesign of over 53 HR business processes in Staff/Class and Personnel Action Request Processing

- 2) Development of business requirements for the PeopleSoft-based EmpowHR Human Resources Information System (HRIS), managed by NFC
- 3) Completed construction of a state-of-the-art facility to house ASC/HCM
  - a. Designed future HCM organization, including strategies for workforce transition and records migration
  - b. Developed corporate training strategy that will eventually affect over 30,000 users
  - c. HCM processing, supported by a Contact Center, began providing services to customers in September 2006
    - i. State 2 (FY 2007) accomplishments include completed design and deployment, including deployment of additional EmpowHR functionality in the areas of pay and level, benefits, awards, performance management, human capital management, employee relations, and labor-management relations.
    - ii. FS participated in NFC-led EmpowHR 9.0 gap analysis sessions, and continues to work with NFC, USDA, and their Unisys contractors to identify and resolved system issues that have impacted implementation. (FS has curtailed the use of EmpowHR for most activities, though they are moving forward on the development of CRM capabilities.)

Region 5 Road Maintenance. This FY 2004 standard competition of 66 FTEs involved road maintenance in the Pacific Southwest Region. The Region had previously done road maintenance in-house. As a result of the study, the Government's Most Efficient Organization (MEO) of 40 FTE will continue to operate in-house. Through FY 2007, FS has realized savings of \$3.88 million after the one-time cost of \$76,000 to conduct the competition. The original cost savings projection was \$14.2 million.

Region 6 Olympic National Forest Road Maintenance. FS completed an express study of 8 FTE engaged in road maintenance work in the state of Washington on the Olympic National Forest. By shifting equipment and services to a performance contractor, FS has saved \$203,000 to date, which was in line with the original projected savings.

Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure. A standard competition of 1200 FTE engaged in Desktop Support, Server Support, Database Management, Telecommunications, IT Security, IT Infrastructure Design, Integration, Testing, and Delivery, All-Risk Incident Support; and IT Management across the agency was completed. The Government's MEO won the competition, and to date, has achieved an operating cost reduction of \$56.4 million. The one-time cost of conducting the competition was \$4.06 million. The original cost-saving projection was \$146 million.

Budget and Performance Integration. The Program Assessment and Rating Tool (PART) is an important tool used by the Agency to evaluate programs. Many of the performance measures included in the budget justification result from PART recommendations. The detailed results of each PART assessment are included in the program areas affected, under the section titled "Independent Reviews". In FY 2006, FS increased its PART score for wildland fire management and invasive species. FS will continue its efforts to improve its watershed PART measures to better display long-term outcome measures which focus on program efforts.

In FY 2006, FS implemented a series of performance reviews, visiting four regions and eight forests. These reviews focused on identifying issues with the use and quality of performance data. The reviews helped the Agency to make improvements in its internal controls related to performance management. The reviews resulted in a set of recommendations for each unit which when implemented will result in improved performance accountability.

In 2002, FS convened a working group that recommended several activities for public-private competitions in accordance with Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-76. An Executive Leadership Team (ELT) considered the recommendations and decided to conduct A-76 studies on over 4,000 FTEs, and BPR studies on budget and finance (1,175 FTEs), and human resources (808 FTEs) activities. The A-76 competition of FS's IT infrastructure has resulted in major improvements as to how those services are delivered within the Agency, and it is estimated that implementation of the new Information Solutions Organization (ISO) will generate savings of more than \$100 million over five years.

Of the 470 total FTEs targeted for the organization, 360 will be based out of Albuquerque, 14 located at the WO, and 91 will be detached from the ASC/HCM. BPR is expected to save approximately \$32 million per year once fully operational. Most cost reductions are in personnel costs due to reduced headcount. A reduction of 296 was captured as of September 30, 2007.

FS began a major BPR of its Business and Finance (B&F) function in an effort to reduce costs and address inconsistent application of financial management processes which had resulted in several years of unfavorable financial audit results. The BPR began in January 2004 with the redesign of key financial functions and a centralization plan for all B&F resources. In February 2005, a centralized Service Center was opened in Albuquerque, NM and the new B&F processes were fully operational by January 2006. Cost reductions of \$38.7 million per year are currently being realized, mainly based on an overall FTE reduction of 650 FTEs. Key B&F processes and procedures have been standardized across the Agency and transactional activities have been centralized. As a result, FS has maintained a clean financial audit for the past several years. The current state cost prior to the BPR was \$139.9 million per year and the post-BPR steady-state cost is \$101.2 million per year, which is a \$38.7 million per year cost savings.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE**

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NRCS leadership initiated efforts at both the State and National levels in July 2006 to identify opportunities to reduce overhead and indirect costs by streamlining its business processes and increasing organizational efficiencies. This effort was in response to the prospect of flat or declining federal budgets, increasing workload due to new farm bill program requirements, and the projected loss of up to 40 percent of the workforce due to retirements over the next five years. This was a two-phase effort. First, each State Conservationist was charged with developing a State efficiency plan to reduce administrative costs by one percent by May 2007. Second, a comprehensive review of National Headquarters was conducted to identify organizational changes to improve efficiencies.

These efforts augmented earlier organizational changes implemented in fiscal years 2004 and 2005 that resulted in the closing of six regional offices with the attendant transfer of functions to National Headquarters. These earlier efforts resulted in the reduction of staff numbers in the Programs Deputy Area from 103 FTEs to 65 FTEs, reorganization at the Divisional Level including the combining of Public and Legislative Affairs, and creation of National Technology Centers and Remote Sensing Laboratories. In addition, nine initiatives were developed at the national level, which further increased efficiencies at the state level. Those initiatives included:

- 1) Restructuring the National Resources Inventory data collection sites resulting in reducing 151 offices with 375 FTEs to three offices with 35 FTEs and 145 Contractors. The new remote sensing approach reduced average sample segment analysis from 4.1 to 1.22 hours per sample segment.
- 2) Restructuring the major Land Resource Area Soil Survey by reducing 255 offices to 146. Estimated annual net benefits when completed in 2009 are \$2.7 million.
- 3) Use of Agricultural Conservation Enrollees/Senior Workers to fill critical experience gaps. Estimated cost savings for FY08 is \$1,073,530.
- 4) Use of A-76 Competitive Sourcing of the Geological Specialists. FY08 cost savings are estimated at \$993,000.
- 5) Development of an improved Program Contract System (ProTracts) through the Department's Lean Six Sigma Grant Process (LSGP). ProTracts efficiency increases to date are 98.6 staff years annually, an estimated \$8.01 million.
- 6) Use of external Technical Service Providers to design and install conservation practices.
- 7) Use of Activity-Based Costing to identify opportunities for streamlining technical assistance business processes and improve efficiencies.
- 8) Improvement of State Allocation Formulas.
- 9) Establishment of a Business Streamlining office to develop a new integrated conservation delivery model that increases efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of products and services, ensures the continued delivery of science-based conservation assistance, and makes participation in NRCS programs easier for producers.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Actions and Initiatives identified in "Performing Today, Preparing for Tomorrow" report of June 2007 are on target. The proposed business model, referenced above, was approved by the Chief presented to State and National Leadership at the National Leadership Team meeting the week of July 28, 2008. The human capital strategy is being evaluated to ensure that it aligns with the proposed business model. Now that the Farm Bill has passed, the strategy teams are in the process of evaluating the impact of the Farm Bill on the 5-year investment strategy and a new budget will be prepared. Budget formulas have been updated and 3-year budget projections will be prepared by September 2008. Adjustments to the 5-year investment strategy based on the feedback are being made, and will be finalized for submission of the 2010 President's Budget Package.

## FARM SERVICE AGENCY

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FSA reduced the number of FSA county offices delivering Farm Loan program services from approximately 2,300 to 800, and consolidated the work across counties where volume of transactions was too low to maintain personnel proficiency in processing farm loan transactions. This reduced the number of Farm Loan Specialist positions from 1713 in fiscal year (FY) 2002 to 1514 in FY 2004, a decrease of 199 full time employees (FTE). FSA also assigned resources to address responsibilities for administrative requests and other “back-office” operation activities, which helped focus the most experienced and knowledgeable Farm Loan Specialists on providing improved customer service to field offices, commercial lenders, and farmers. Other organizational structuring initiatives include:

### *State Offices*

- Recognized deficiencies and made resource investments in areas such as Management Information System (MIS) initiatives and website development, which improved customer service through improved communication.

### *Information Technology Services Division (ITSD)*

- Partnered with other USDA agencies to collaborate on Enterprise Architecture processes and tools. Internal development project teams are focused on re-using enterprise assets and identifying potential candidates for leveraging throughout USDA to reduce IT expenditure, thereby reducing overall indirect costs.

### *Human Resources Division (HRD)*

- Implemented the following programs, which have improved management effectiveness and organizational capacity to carry out the Agency’s mission:
  - 1) Leadership Develop Program to build leadership competencies.
  - 2) State District Director (DD) training program to provide guidance on topics such as performance management, customer service delivery, leadership, and listening skills.
  - 3) DD mentoring program.
  - 4) Learning Development Channel for grade GS-15 and above positions.

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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RD determined that its programs could best be delivered in a two-tiered field structure similar to the structure being used by 10 State operations. RD restructured field offices in the remaining States that were currently operating in a three-tiered structure, so that all States would have a two-tiered field structure.

RD results are summarized below:

- Organizational restructuring in RD was announced in January 2007 and the impacted State Directors submitted new business plans for consideration that were based on established guidelines from the National Office but met the unique needs of their state (staff size, geography, program mix, etc.). Implementation began on November 15, 2007, with receipt



of the Department's approval. RD changed from a three-tiered structure (i.e., State, Area, and Local offices) in 37 of its State Offices to a two-tiered structure (i.e., State and Area). RD's initial approved plans called for the closure of 207 field offices and the opening of 16. There have been some minor changes to the initial plans in a few states to accommodate unique situations encountered. Offices scheduled for closure are being consolidated into nearby offices and services to the customers in these areas will continue uninterrupted. The restructuring resulted in a field structure of 217 Area offices, 174 Sub-area offices, and 58 Satellite offices.

- The de-layering resulting from the implementation of the new business plan will enable RD to staff the new structure with a reduced FTE ceiling of 6,300. This ceiling was established in the FY 2007 Budget and was to be achieved by September 30, 2007. This represents a reduction in its ceiling of more than 500 FTEs from the 2006 ceiling of 6,872 positions. FTE ceiling compared to actual FTE usage was 6872/6475 in FY 2006; 6300/6281 in FY 2007; and 6300/5919 as of May 24, 2008, for FY 2008. RD facilitated the delayering by obtaining Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA). VERA was offered to employees from July 31 - December 31, 2007. RD used VERA to help meet lower FTE ceilings in individual States. There were 132 employees who retired under VERA during the open period. This accounted for a significant portion of the 362 total separations (voluntary retirements, resignations, and reassignments) that resulted from the restructuring.
- Implementation of the new business plan was to be completed by March 31, 2008. The implementation has been slowed down due to two factors outside of RD's control. One is the loss of leasing authority at the State Office level, both for RD and for the Farm Service Agency which is the lead agency in many of the USDA Service Centers, and a requirement that any leasing actions receive prior approval from the General Services Administration. This has significantly delayed consolidation efforts. The second factor was General Provision 716 in USDA's FY 2008 Appropriations Bill that was signed on December 26, 2007, that required RD to notify Congress 60 days before it closed an office. As of June 30, 2008, RD has closed 137 offices with 60 left to be closed.

The restructuring is expected to save a total of \$3,341,816.

### **III. WORKFORCE RESTRUCTURING**

To reshape segments of the workforce and facilitate organizational restructuring, USDA Agencies have used attrition, Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), and Voluntary Separation Incentive Programs (VSIP) authority, as follows:

- In 2007, the Agricultural Research Service requested VSIP authority for the Beltsville Area Research Center which resulted in 63 separations. Approximately one-third of the vacant positions were refilled and two-thirds were abolished. The Agricultural Research Service estimated that use of the VSIP resulted in a net savings of \$2 million in 2007, with an additional \$4.1 million savings expected in 2008. Also in 2007, Rural Development facilitated the de-layering of State Offices by using VERA. Of the 362

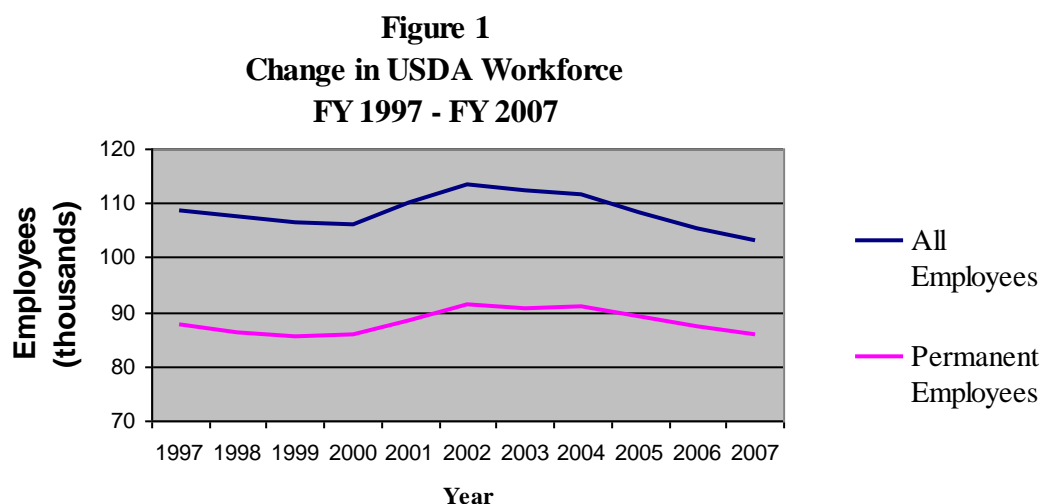
total separations (voluntary retirements, resignations, and reassignments) that resulted from the restructuring, 132 employees took advantage of the VERA authority.

- In 2006 and 2007, the Forest Service used VSIP authority to facilitate its nationwide consolidation of administrative functions in Albuquerque, New Mexico. As of September 30, 2007, 496 buyouts had been approved.
- In 2005, budget challenges within the Farm Service Agency resulted in approximately 850 fewer authorized positions than the previous fiscal year's authorization. Much of this reduction was accomplished by attrition and employing fewer temporary employees. However, the Farm Service Agency also used VERA and VSIP authorities for Federal and County employees. A total of 424 permanent Federal and County employees accepted offers during the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2006.

#### IV. WORKFORCE - OVERVIEW and ANALYSIS

##### USDA's CHANGING WORKFORCE

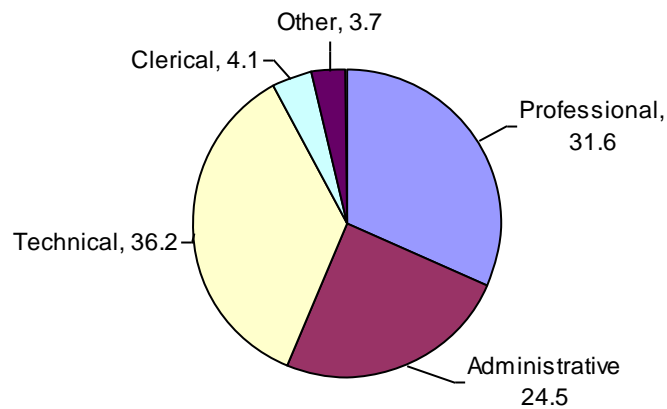
As shown in Figure 1, USDA's workforce has declined over the past decade. This decline reflects USDA's implementation of technological advances as well as the various agencies' reorganizations and restructuring efforts to streamline organizations and improve operational efficiency. From FY 2006 to FY 2007, the total USDA workforce decreased by 2.0%. The number of permanent full-time and part-time employees decreased by 1.7 %. Therefore, one of the Department's greatest challenges is to maintain a highly-skilled staff of scientific and technically-skilled employees to carry out USDA's diverse mission.



The majority of USDA employees are in professional and technical occupations. As depicted in Figure 2, the breakdown of employees by Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Others are:

Professional	31.6%
Technical	36.2%
Administrative	24.5%
Clerical	4.1%
Others	3.7%

**Figure 2**  
**Employees by Occupation**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 2007**

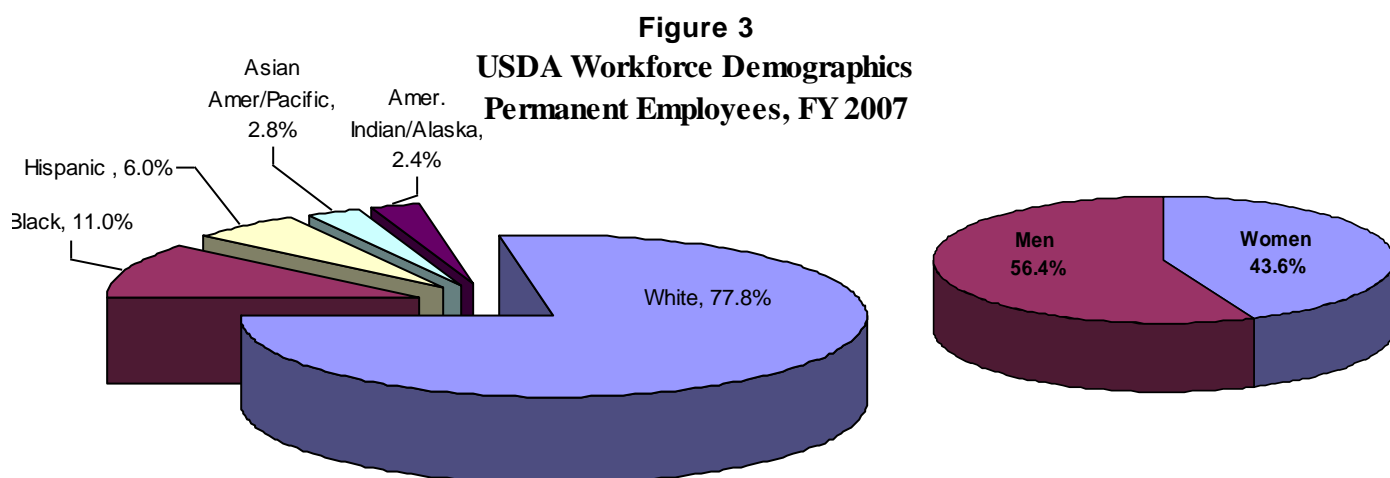


## **DIVERSITY**

Figure 3 illustrates USDA's demographic statistics by race, national origin, and gender. USDA maintains a strong commitment to increasing diversity in its workforce. From FY 2006 to FY 2007, minority representation increased slightly from 21.9% to 22.2%. As previously reflected in Table 1, when compared to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF), USDA's greatest current challenge is the recruitment and retention of Hispanics employees. At the end of FY 2007, Hispanic employees represented 6.0% of USDA's workforce (compared to 13.3% of the CLF, and 7.8% of the Relative Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)).

USDA strives to ensure diversity among all demographic categories. In support of the *President's Hispanic Nine-Point Plan*, and in creating successful recruitment, retention, and promotion practices, USDA has implemented a strategic human capital approach to improve Hispanic representation in the workforce, through such efforts as increased outreach activities in

Hispanic–Serving school districts, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and other educational institutions and employment programs and services.



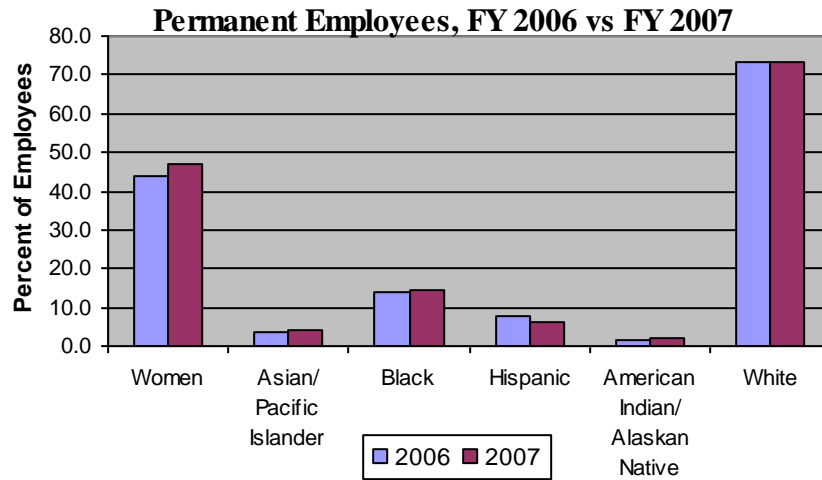
**Table 2**  
**USDA Labor Force Demographics Compared to U.S. CLF and RCLF**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 2007**

	Women	Black	Hispanic	Asian Amer./Pacific Islander	Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	White
USDA Workforce	43.6%	11.0%	6.0%	2.8%	2.4%	77.8%
CLF as of 9/30/07	45.7%	10.1%	13.3%	4.3%	.7%	71.6%
RCLF as of 9/30/07	43.9%	17.8%	7.8%	5.3%	2.0%	67.1%

## NEW HIRES

During FY 2007, USDA hired 4,222 new employees. As a percentage of new hires during this time, women increased from 44.1% to 47.1%, compared to FY 2006. Overall percentages of minority hires remained consistent from the prior year. The percentage for Asian American/Pacific Islanders increased from 3.6% to 4.2%. Blacks and American Indian/Alaska Natives increased slightly. Hispanics, as a percentage of new hires, decreased from 7.5% to 6.2%. Therefore, relative to the CLF, among new hires during FY 2007, USDA's percentages improved for Women, Blacks, and Asian American/Pacific Islanders.

**Figure 4**  
**USDA New Hires**



**Table 3**  
**Demographics of USDA New Hires Compared to the U.S. CLF and RCLF**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 2007**

	Women	Black	Hispanic	Asian Amer./Pacific Islanders	Amer. Indian/Alaska Native	White
USDA New Hires FY 2007	47.1%	14.2%	6.5%	4.2%	2.0%	73.3%
CLF as of 9/30/07	45.7%	10.1%	13.3%	4.3%	0.7%	71.6%
RCLF as of 9/30/07	43.9%	17.8%	7.8%	5.3%	2.0%	67.1%

## AVERAGE AGE

From FY 2006 to FY 2007, the average age of USDA's permanent employees increased from 44 years old to 46 years old. At the end of FY 2007, 46% of the workforce was age 50 or older. By contrast, employees age 30 or younger comprised only 10.2% of the permanent USDA workforce.

The potential loss of employees due to future retirements, coupled with a tightening labor supply, present a challenge for workforce planning. Nearly 29% of all supervisors and managers, (including SES) are age 55 or older. Many of these are USDA's most technically skilled or scientifically trained employees.

**Figure 5**  
**USDA Age Profile**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 2007**

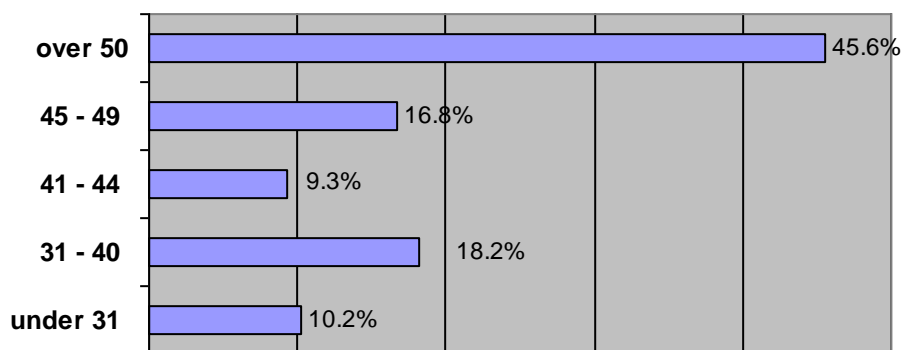
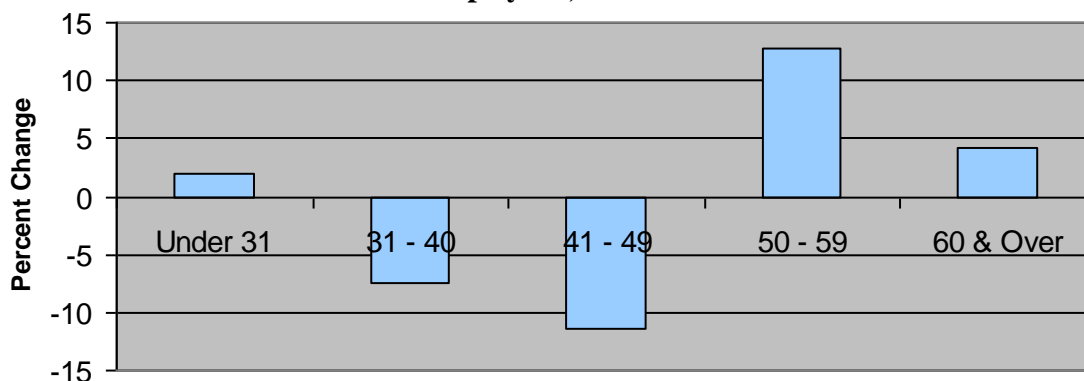


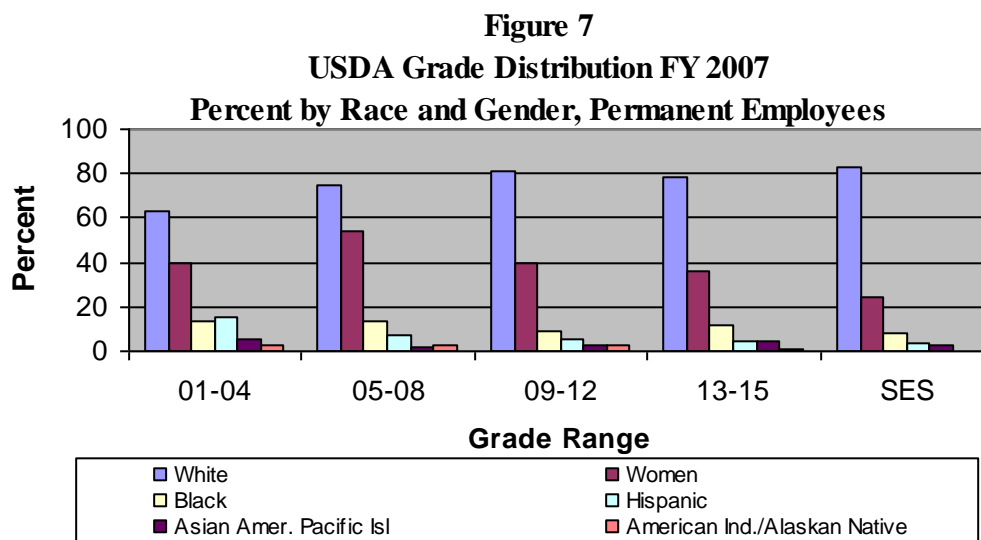
Figure 6, below, illustrates specific changes in defined age brackets from FY 1997 to FY 2007. The largest percentage decreases occurred within the 31-40 and 41-49 age groups. For example, between FY 1997 and FY 2007, the percentage of employees in the 41-49 age group decreased 11.4%, lowering its share of the workforce from 37.4% to 26%. The 31-40 age group decreased 7.5%, lowering its share from 25.7% to 18.2%. The largest percentage increases occurred in the 50-59 and the 60 and over age categories. The 50-59 age group increased 12.8%, accounting for 36.9% of the workforce in FY 2007, compared to 24.1% a decade ago. Employees 60 and over increased 4.2% and accounted for 8.7% of the work force compared to 4.5 percent in FY 1997.

**Figure 6**  
**Percentage Changes by Age Brackets**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 1997- FY 2007**



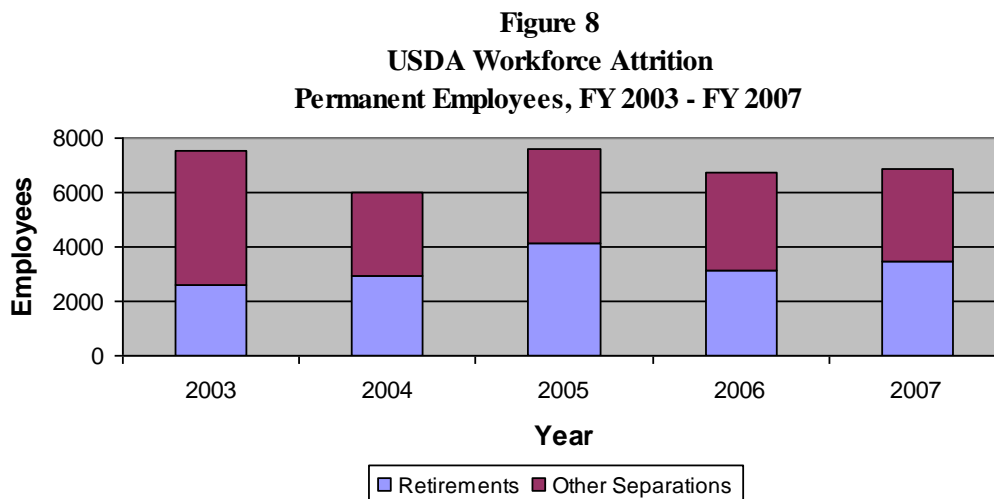
## GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND MINORITY REPRESENTATION

In FY 2007, the average USDA employee grade level was a GS-09. Of the total permanent employees, 34.7% were in GS 01-08 level positions, 47.6% were in GS 09-12 positions, and 17.8% were in grades GS-13 and above. At the end of FY 2007, USDA employed 433 Senior Executives. Minority employees accounted for 21.5% of the employees at the GS-13 level and above and 16.9% of Senior Executives.



## WORKFORCE ATTRITION

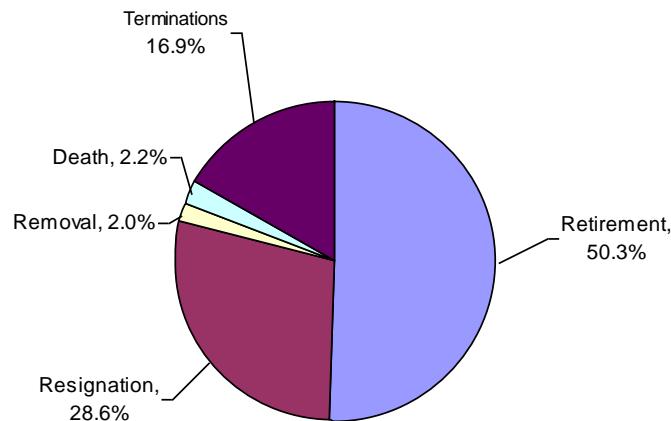
The USDA attrition rate for permanent employees averaged 7.7% from FY 2003 to FY 2007. In FY 2007, the attrition rate was 7.8%, with 6,849 separations. Retirements in FY 2007 accounted for 50.3% of employees who separated from the workforce. Other separations included resignations, deaths, removals, and terminations (such as transfers).





Of the employees who left USDA for reasons other than retirement, 28.6% left by resignation, the majority of which were voluntary (82%). Another 16.9% left by termination (91% voluntary). The remaining losses were due to death or removal. USDA has identified retention strategies and incentives as a key strategy to retaining highly-qualified employees, particularly those in mission critical occupations.

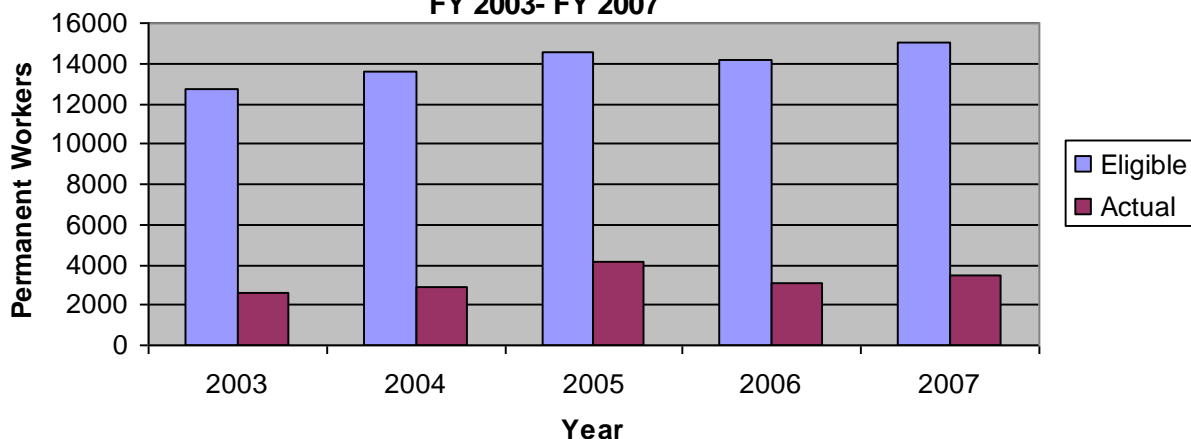
**Figure 9**  
**USDA Separations by Type**  
**Permanent Employees, FY 2007**



## RETIREMENTS

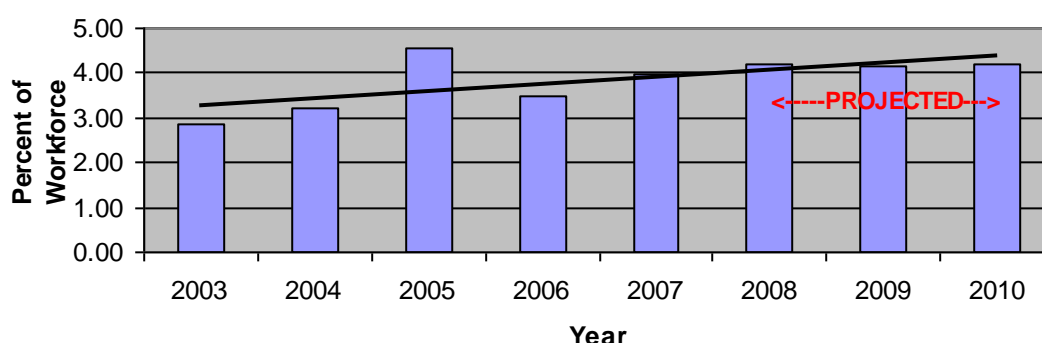
From FY 2003 through FY 2007, actual retirements averaged 23% of the retirement eligible workforce. Of the approximately 15,000 permanent employees who were eligible for retirement in FY 2007, 3,448 or 23% retired compared to 22% in FY 2006. The average age of retiring employees was 59 years old, with 29 years of service.

**Figure 10**  
**Retirement Eligibility vs Actual Retired**  
**FY 2003- FY 2007**



USDA retirements are projected to increase during FY 2008 and remain steady at 4.2% of the active permanent workforce through FY 2010. These projections are based on the previous five-year combined average of Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees Retirement System retirements (as a percent of eligibility during the same period, using end of year FY 2007 permanent employees as the base). These projections also take into consideration the five-year (FY 2003 – FY 2007) average employee retirement age of 59 years old, with an average of 29 years of service. This is somewhat higher than the OPM projection of a government-wide retirement rate of 3.9% for FY 2008 – FY 2010.

**Figure 11**  
**USDA Retirements as a Percent of Permanent Workforce**  
**FY 2002-2007, Projected FY 2008-2010**



From FY 2008 through FY 2010, a cumulative total of 22,669 employees, representing 26.4% of the permanent workforce, are expected to be eligible for retirement. Of non-SES supervisors and managers, 36.3% will be eligible to retire by FY 2010 and of SES employees, 62.8% will be eligible to retire by FY 2010.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>USDA Retirement Eligible Employees, Projected for FY 2008 – FY 2010</b>					
<b>Employee Type</b>	<b>USDA Permanent Workforce</b>	<b>Number Eligible to Retire FY 2008 – FY 2010 1/</b>			<b>Percent Eligible</b>
	End of FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2010
All Employees	85,719	15,598	19,071	22,669	26.4%
Non-SES Supervisors/Managers	11,570	2,928	3,531	4,201	36.3%
SES	433	212	245	272	62.8%

Source: National Finance Center.

1/ Totals include carryover of eligible employees from FY 2007 and previous years.

## MISSION CRITICAL OCCUPATIONS

The 20 occupations set forth in Table 5, below, represent the positions that USDA has identified as critical to achieving its mission. At the end of FY 2007, 51,252 employees, or 59.8% of the USDA workforce were in mission critical occupations (MCO). Each agency and mission area within USDA has employees in MCOs. During FY 2007, 28.2% of employees who separated from USDA occupied an MCO. Employees in an MCO represent 57.5 % of USDA employees eligible to retire in FY 2008 and 57.6% of all permanent USDA employees eligible to retire FY 2008 - FY 2010.

<b>Table 5 USDA Retirement Eligible MCO Employees, FY2008</b>			
<b>Mission Critical Occupational Series</b>	<b>End of FY 2007 Workforce</b>	<b>Eligible For Retirement FY 2008</b>	<b>Percent Eligible</b>
<b>0201 - PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT</b>	1,036	222	21.4
<b>0301 - MISC. ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM</b>	2,430	596	24.5
<b>0334 &amp; 2210 - COMPUTER INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</b>	3,437	612	17.8
<b>0343 - MANAGEMENT &amp; PROGRAM ANALYSIS</b>	1,609	369	22.9
<b>0401 - GEN BIOLCL SCI</b>	4,695	921	19.6
<b>0404 - BIOLCL TECHNCN</b>	2,349	275	11.7
<b>0457 - SOIL CONSERVATION</b>	4,331	647	14.9
<b>0458 - SOIL CONSV TECHNCN</b>	1,340	183	13.7
<b>0460 - FORESTRY</b>	2,134	569	26.7
<b>0462 - FORESTRY TECHNICIAN</b>	8,113	788	9.7
<b>0470 - SOIL SCIENCE</b>	1,184	276	23.3
<b>0630 - DIETICIAN &amp; NUTRITIONIST</b>	131	31	23.7
<b>0696 - CONSUMER SAFETY</b>	270	49	18.1
<b>0701 - VETERINARY MEDICAL SCIENCE</b>	1,655	415	25.1
<b>1101 - GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY</b>	4,027	719	17.9
<b>1165 - LOAN SPECIALIST</b>	3,961	748	18.9
<b>1530 - STATISTICIAN</b>	562	101	18.0
<b>1862 - CONSUMER SAFETY INSPECTION</b>	3,285	795	24.2
<b>1863 - FOOD INSPECTION</b>	3,320	307	9.2
<b>1980 - AGRL COMMODO GRDNG</b>	1,383	345	24.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>51,252</b>	<b>8,968</b>	<b>17.5</b>

Source: National Finance Center

Totals for FY 2008 include carryover of eligible employees from FY 2007 and previous years.

Table 6: Mission Critical Occupations Trends and Gap Analysis

Mission Critical Occupational Series	Current #	Avg Retire	Avg Total	Avg Hiring	<=Projected Workforce (with hiring and attrition)=>					1-Yr		5-Yr	
	of Perm.'s	Rate	Attrition Rate	Rate	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Gap	%	Gap	%
0201 - PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT	1027	4.7%	13.3%	9.0%	983	940	900	861	824	44	4%	203	20%
0301 - MISC. ADMINISTRATIVE	2517	5.1%	8.5%	6.3%	2462	2409	2356	2305	2255	55	2%	262	10%
0334 & 2210 - COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY	3396	4.4%	6.8%	5.1%	3336	3278	3220	3164	3108	60	2%	288	8%
0343 - MANAGEMENT & PROGRAM ANALYSIS	1692	4.9%	7.9%	3.6%	1620	1552	1486	1424	1363	72	4%	329	19%
0401 - GEN BIOLCL SCI	4733	3.3%	5.0%	5.1%	4736	4739	4742	4745	4748	-3	0%	-15	0%
0404 - BIOLCL TECHN CN	2341	2.3%	7.2%	8.8%	2377	2413	2450	2487	2525	-36	-2%	-184	-8%
0457 - SOIL CONSERVATION	4047	3.0%	4.7%	5.6%	4082	4117	4152	4188	4224	-35	-1%	-177	-4%
0458 - SOIL CONSV TECHN CN	1318	2.5%	5.0%	7.3%	1348	1378	1409	1441	1474	-30	-2%	-156	-12%
0460 - FORESTRY	1998	5.3%	6.7%	3.4%	1933	1870	1809	1750	1693	65	3%	305	15%
0462 - FORESTRY TECHNICIAN	8333	3.3%	9.1%	9.1%	8326	8319	8313	8306	8299	7	0%	34	0%
0470 - SOIL SCIENCE	1161	4.2%	6.4%	5.3%	1148	1134	1121	1108	1096	13	1%	65	6%
0630 - DIETICIAN & NUTRITIONIST	123	2.5%	4.8%	7.4%	126	129	133	136	140	-3	-3%	-17	-13%
0696 - CONSUMER SAFETY	270	3.6%	4.2%	1.1%	262	254	246	238	231	8	3%	39	15%
0701 - VETERINARY MEDICAL SCIENCE	1656	4.2%	7.6%	7.8%	1658	1660	1662	1664	1665	-2	0%	-9	-1%
1101 - GENERAL BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	3934	3.7%	7.2%	6.1%	3889	3845	3801	3758	3715	45	1%	219	6%
1165 - LOAN SPECIALIST	3875	3.9%	5.9%	3.4%	3777	3681	3587	3496	3408	98	3%	467	12%
1530 - STATISTICIAN	555	2.5%	4.5%	4.9%	558	560	563	565	568	-3	0%	-13	-2%
1862 - CONSUMER SAFETY INSPECTION	3555	4.9%	5.8%	1.0%	3384	3221	3066	2918	2778	171	5%	777	22%
1863 - FOOD INSPECTION	3162	2.3%	6.0%	12.7%	3375	3603	3846	4106	4383	-213	-7%	-1,221	-39%
1980 - AGRL COMMODO GRDNG	1369	5.0%	8.4%	5.6%	1331	1295	1259	1224	1191	38	3%	178	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51062</b>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>50724</b>	<b>50389</b>	<b>50056</b>	<b>49725</b>	<b>49396</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>3%</b>
Average Rates based on the average of FY2005-2007													
Total Attrition includes: Retirements, Resignations, Terminations, Removals and Deaths													
1 & 5-year Gap - negative number means a projected growth in the numbers over the period													
											Source:		
											National Finance		
											Center		

**Table 6**, above, provides workforce projections for FY 2009-2013 using averages for annual retirement rates, total attrition rates and hiring rates from the past 3 years (FY2005-2007) for each MCO. In this workforce projection model, 1-year and 5-year Workforce Gaps are calculated where the attrition rate is greater than the hiring rate using the current number of permanent employees on-board as the basis. This model provides indications of the overall trends for each MCO, rather than a precise estimate of staffing levels. As gaps appear, managers in each of the MCO's are and will continue to make adjustments to correct any adverse impacts resulting from reduced staffing levels. In some cases this model already shows the results of these adjustments, and in other cases adjustments are already planned and will mitigate projected staffing shortages.

The MCO's identified in this model with having the highest projected gaps were analyzed further to understand the impacts and ensure corrective actions were being implemented.

**Consumer Safety Inspection (1862)** – The large gap between attrition and hiring projected can be attributed to a low level of external hiring. However, FSIS has utilized conversions from the Food Inspection (1863) occupation to maintain staffing levels. Since FY 2005, the Consumer Safety Inspection (1662) occupation has actually increased by 500 (16%) employees. The agency has found that internal hiring from the Food Inspection occupation to be a more effective means of maintaining staffing levels. In addition, the agency has also obtained a Dual Compensation Waiver for this occupation and the Veterinary Science (701) occupation to encourage the use of retirees to help address staffing shortages.

**Personnel Management (201)** – This occupation has and is continuing to be impacted by organizational restructuring efforts. The projected gap is the result of planned management actions to reduce staffing levels. For example, FS recently centralized its HR operations from 93 to one HR processing center, reducing the number of HR positions by over 400. Other agencies are looking at similar HR restructuring, which will result in decreased staffing levels in the Personnel Management occupation. Competencies for this occupation are being tracked using the Federal Competency Assessment Tool (FCAT). USDA is in the second year of developing strategies to develop competencies based on this assessment tool.

**Program Analysis (343)** – Similar to the Personnel Management (201) occupation, the gap in the Program Analysis occupation is the result of planned staffing reductions related to organizational restructuring efforts.

**Forestry (460)** - This occupation has experienced a steady decline in staffing levels for a number of years, reducing by 371 (16%) positions since 2005. This is due to the shift in the skill needs in the land management profession from specialist to generalist. In FS, many of the Forestry positions have been converted to General Biological Science (401) positions and other related positions. Since 2005, the number of General Biological Science positions has increased by over 1,000.

**Veterinary Medical Science (701)** – Because of the critical nature of this occupation to one of the core USDA mission goals, protecting the nation's food supply, several USDA agencies have taken pro-active measures to ensure that both adequate staffing levels and

competency proficiencies are maintained. FSIS, APHIS, and ARS have each focused on the Veterinary Medical Science occupation within their agency, analyzed skill and competency gaps and put in place measures to ensure optimal staffing and skill levels. For example, FSIS has utilized special authorities such as Dual Compensation Waivers and Direct Hire along with their existing authorities for recruitment incentives to successfully support staffing levels. APHIS has used a competency survey of their supervisory Veterinary Medical Officers to build a comprehensive competency-based employee development strategy to ensure sustained effectiveness in these key positions. So as a result of these proactive measures the Veterinary Medical Science occupation is projected to continue to achieve optimum staffing levels into the future.

Workforce Projection Models such as the one used to produce **Table 6** do not account for program changes and shifts in emphasis. The 2008 Farm Bill will result in significant program shifts, which will ultimately result in changes in workforce requirements that have yet to be fully defined. As the new legislation begins to be implemented, agencies will have the opportunity to translate program changes into new workforce and skill requirements. In the near future, USDA will conduct a new Workforce Analysis and Workforce plan that will incorporate the changes and shifts in the workforce direction brought about by the Farm Bill and the new administration.

## **V. WORKFORCE STRATEGIES**

### **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

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From FY 2005-FY 2007, USDA has taken aggressive steps to attract high-quality applicants by eliminating barriers, re-engineering business processes, automating functions, and increasing oversight and accountability. As a result, USDA has reduced its hiring time for both Senior Executives and GS employees. During this same time period, USDA increased the use of hiring flexibilities, notified applicants consistently within a 45-day time frame, and increased the use of career patterns to attract the best employees. USDA's results during this three-year period are among the best in the Federal government.

Specifically, OHCM developed a Departmental Recruitment Plan for FY 2008-FY 2010 which serves as a companion document to USDA's Strategic Workforce Plan, Strategic Leadership Succession Plan, Improve the Hiring Plan, and Strategic Human Capital Plan. The recruitment plan provides agency managers and supervisors with strategies for attracting, developing, and retaining a quality workforce with the appropriate level and mix of skills and abilities to accomplish the goals and mission of the Department over the next two years.

The strategies set forth in the Departmental Recruitment Plan provide assistance to managers and supervisors in restructuring the workforce and closing any existing or potential skills gaps. Included among the challenges USDA faces in workforce planning are geographic diversity (location remoteness, cost of living); changes in agencies' program directions and priorities; and the declining number of U.S. citizen doctoral candidates.

The immediate short-term goal is to conduct, monitor, and plan recruitment activities that will meet immediate and projected hiring needs based on the annual budget and on projected retirements and yearly turnover. The Departmental Recruitment Plan incorporates awareness of the following factors critical to successful recruitment and retention:

**The Changing Environment** - takes into consideration a significant retirement wave among current Federal employees, competition for scarce talent among employers nationally, and the fact that employees' expectations, needs and interests have shifted from past generations.

**Adopting a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Mindset** – encourages supervisors and managers to adapt to employees' expectations by providing flexible work hours and an environment that supports success; adequate technology in the workplace; and opportunities for promotion, rewards and training.

**Utilizing the Career Patterns Approach** – ensures that managers and leaders have the specific competencies to supervise and manage in non-traditional work settings, creates a workforce that is capable of using its planning efforts to build and operate in a broad range of employer-employee arrangements, and utilizes *Career Pattern Dimensions* to continually acknowledge varying determinants such as time in career, mobility, permanence, mission-focus, and flexible arrangements.

The OPM Career Patterns Initiative and Merit System Principles are inherent in the Departmental Recruitment Plan. The standards set forth in the Human Capital Accountability and Assessment Framework will serve as the model for program proficiency.

USDA's senior leaders and managers will be intricately involved in its strategic recruitment and retention initiatives, thereby ensuring the necessary organizational focus and resources required. Effective recruiting will:

- Close workforce competency gaps and create a performance-oriented culture who proudly and capably serves the American people;
- Use flexible compensation strategies to attract and retain quality employees who possess mission-critical competencies; and
- Emphasize USDA's quality of work life programs.

## **SUCCESSION PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

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Succession planning is foremost a management function, requiring involvement and participation of USDA management at all levels. OHCM, in concert with the mission areas, agencies and Staff Offices, provides guidance in developing and implementing succession plans to ensure the readiness of current staff to assume the responsibilities of leadership positions.

USDA's leadership development and succession strategy and policy, which reflect its mission and culture, are based upon workforce analyses that identify current and future workforce and



leadership needs. USDA's Strategic Leadership Succession Plan provides a Departmental framework for identifying leadership resource gaps, strategies for addressing those gaps, and empirical methods for evaluating success in gap closure.

Workforce planning requires effective *succession planning* to ensure leadership continuity and the continual development of the highly-talented and skilled staff within an organization. Successful succession planning establishes a process that outlines the specific competencies desired for the organization; identifies all key positions in the organization and the specific competencies for these key positions; identifies potential future candidates from within the organization and profiles of future recruits; and provides development opportunities to these candidates through training, coaching, mentoring, and on-the-job training.

In order to evaluate and determine the readiness of current staff to assume key leadership positions, USDA assessed the proficiency of its leaders in 28 leadership competencies and six performance management competencies established by the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, using a web-enabled tool called the Federal Competency Assessment Tool – Management, provided by OPM. Based on an analysis of the competency assessment results, two competencies were identified for gap closure across USDA. The selected competencies were:

- **Understanding Performance Management Processes and Practices** to actively manage self and others; and
- **Facilitating Performance** to guide the efforts of self and others toward performance goals through ongoing support, removal of performance obstacles, managing consequences, and holding employees accountable.

Each selected competency encompasses underlying components and leadership skills that are tied directly to USDA's achievement of its strategic goals. USDA's strategies for facilitating leadership succession goals include:

- Offering an SES CDP to prepare employees for leadership advancement by providing a structured, comprehensive, and cohesive program of classroom and practical development activities that will instill the competencies essential for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Incorporating the results of Annual Employee Surveys into human capital planning and communication strategies;
- Hiring and training employees with skills in information technology, public health, and other mission-critical areas;
- Developing and implementing a unified automated staffing system;
- Monitoring mission area succession planning results; and
- Developing, reviewing, and implementing human capital leadership policies.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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The success of USDA's workforce planning strategies is best demonstrated with a workforce that is empowered with the skills and expertise to perform and accomplish the Department's mission.

Performance management is USDA's comprehensive cross-cutting business management strategy for ensuring the effective management and assessment of employee performance in achieving USDA goals. The performance management system insures accountability and responsibility for accomplishing the Department's mission by effectively communicating USDA's strategic goals and objectives to its employees; providing effective leadership; increasing competencies across all segments of the workforce; cultivating talent; and recognizing results and excellence in performance. Performance management serves as a common thread between the Department's human capital plans, strategies, and policies and is directly linked to an effective workforce planning process.

The effective linkage of pay to performance provides managers the opportunity to utilize the tools available to motivate, develop, and retain top performers. These tools include translating employee performance ratings into pay increases and awards, use of monetary and nonmonetary recognition programs, and recruitment and retention incentives which allows USDA to establish the desired current and future workforce.

USDA's performance management system has become an integral component of the Department's successful achievement of organizational goals and objectives. In 2007, USDA established a uniform performance management system and vision for an integrated, Department-wide performance strategy. This strategy included the following objectives:

- Ensuring consistent application of processes and guidelines for planning, monitoring, developing, assessing and rewarding performance;
- Creating training and developmental programs that focus on management skills and an increased level of accountability for managers to provide performance feedback;
- Developing tools to establish a performance culture that ensures high levels of worker engagement;
- Increasing competency and skill levels which are marketable, transferrable, and that can be leveraged within the organization;
- Strengthening collaboration between supervisors, employees, and peers that build networks and drives a performance driven culture; and
- Improving the capacity to measure workforce performance and the contribution of employees.

When ensuring a high-performing workforce, USDA's employees are its most important asset.

During the next two years, USDA will continue to increase its investment in the quality and accountability of USDA's performance management system thereby facilitating a results-

focused, highly performing workforce that is available to embrace future leadership and program delivery demands.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **USDA RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES**

USDA continues to attract the “best and brightest” through aggressive hiring timelines and increased awareness among senior leaders of the importance of recruiting talented individuals in a timely manner, and by utilizing creative ways to retain that talent. Among the various recruitment and retention strategies that the USDA mission areas and agencies currently use, are the following:

#### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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- Using flexible hiring authorities to the maximum extent possible;
- Participating in career and job fairs, establishing and maintaining relationships with colleges and universities with a high concentration of students from targeted groups;
- Using student employment programs;
- Advertising individual vacancies through appropriate professional associations and publications
- Increasing the use of e-learning technology and methods, including AgLearn, blended training, Webinars, training portal websites through the internet/intranet, CD-ROM, satellite, etc., which are more portable and less costly than instructor-led training, and can be more individualized for all types of training and “self paced” instruction;
- Promoting the use of family friendly programs by developing and disseminating targeted communications about the programs to employees and managers; and
- Mentoring new employees to ensure a successful transition into mission area’s workplace.

#### **FOOD SAFETY**

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- Using recruitment bonuses, superior qualifications appointments, and paying travel expenses for Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officers and other eligible persons to their first duty station;
- Developing partnerships with recruitment sources such as academic institutions and professional associations;
- Using program personnel with direct knowledge of the positions to recruit rather than HR staff;
- Creating an agency policy for Creditable Service for Annual Leave Accrual, which allows newly appointed Federal employee’s prior non-Federal or active military duty work experience to be creditable in determining the amount of annual leave the employee will earn;
- Training HR staff and management on and encouraging them to use all of our recruitment flexibilities and alternative hiring authorities;

- Issuing a directive on all recruitment and retention flexibilities;
- Developing an Agency policy on paying referral bonuses to employees who refer candidates for employment;
- Seeking direct hire authority for food inspectors and consumer safety inspectors;
- Using a sound merit promotion program that markets the availability and use of family-friendly and flexible work schedules and leave policies;
- Petitioning OPM for a dual compensation waiver that is less restrictive. OPM has proposed legislation that would allow retirees to return to work on a limited basis, without impact on their salary or annuity, making it easier for Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) to reemploy needed individuals when faced with unusual circumstances. The proposed legislation also allows OPM to delegate waiver authority to Agencies, allowing them to make critical dual compensation decisions more efficiently; and
- Using retention allowances to retain employees with unique skills who would otherwise leave the Federal Government.

## **RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS**

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- Reviewing and assessing the use of student programs and the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Postdoctoral Research Associate programs;
- Encouraging managers to convert students to permanent positions, where appropriate, and recruit from the current applicant pool of ARS Postdoctoral Research Associates for permanent positions;
- Continuing to use the Senior Scientific Research Service to recruit, appoint, and competitively pay world-class bench scientists;
- Continuing to use the Veterinary Medical Doctoral Program to advertise and fill critical Veterinary Medical positions;
- Continuing to use the special Demonstration Project authority to recruit for positions; and
- Using a set relocation bonus schedule to facilitate the movement of personnel between 45 field offices and the Washington Headquarters office.

## **MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS**

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- Using the Federal Career Internship Program, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), Outstanding Scholars Program, and various other excepted authority appointments;
- Offering recruitment, relocation, and retention bonuses and paying travel and transportation expenses for new appointees and pre-employment interviews;
- Increasing the linkage between selecting officials and HR to facilitate more effective recruitment activity;
- Developing strategic partnerships with a variety of academic, professional and social organizations to improve workforce diversity;
- Evaluating and continuously refining each organization's overall recruitment strategy;
- Using a wide variety of flexible work schedules and teleworking opportunities in both field and headquarters offices; and

- Using numerous job shadowing opportunities as well as formal details and rotational assignments.

## **FOREST SERVICE**

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- Using an on-going systematic approach to recruiting a highly-skilled and diverse workforce that is based upon annual workforce planning both at the national and field levels;
- Using a National Recruitment Council to coordinate recruitment efforts, develop planning and recruitment tools, and provide direction for a system of National Recruitment Initiatives, based at 12 targeted universities; and
- Using a system for monitoring progress in addressing key workforce planning issues and establishing accountability. A recent review of these measures indicated that in FY 2007, 13% of all external hires were SCEP placements. Additionally, for the fourth consecutive year, the representation of minorities in external new hires (19%) exceeded the representation of minorities in the permanent workforce as a whole (16%).

## **FARM AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICES**

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- Developing partnerships with academic institutions with high minority enrollments, such as the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, as a means to develop a ready pool of women and minority candidates;
- Using USDA Intern Programs to recruit entry-level individuals for mission-critical fields including:
  - Information Technology Development Program,
  - Acquisition Intern Program,
  - Biological Sciences Development Program, and
  - Office of the Secretary Management Intern Program; and
- Increasing the use of volunteers and special appointing authorities, including the Presidential Management Intern Program, SCEP, Severely Physically Handicapped and Mentally Retarded Persons, Disabled Veterans, and Veterans' Recruitment Act;
- Expanding outreach efforts through attendance at job fairs and by internet posting of vacancy announcements;
- Using the full range of flexibilities including a formal mentoring program for trainees and junior employees, contractual servicing agreements, recruitment and relocation bonuses, creative compensation packages such as special salary rates, automated hiring systems, opportunities to telecommute, flexible and varying work schedules, and student loan repayments; and
- Using a progressive retention plan with the following components:
  - Identifying employees who are critical to accomplishing the organization's goals;
  - Developing an infrastructure to provide constant feedback between these employees and their supervisors to determine what they want and need to become long-term assets to the organization; and

- Developing a means for providing incentives and/or working conditions of value to these employees. This system must provide an accurate measurement of the actual return on investment concerning the retention of these employees.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **USDA TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

USDA continues to devote considerable resources to leadership training and development programs many of which are uniquely tailored to the individual agency's mission-critical occupations. Among the key strategies employed by the various USDA mission areas and agencies during FY 2008, to develop bench strength and increase talent pools are the following:

#### **USDA's SES CDP**

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As part of its ongoing efforts to address an impending wave of projected retirements, USDA developed an SES CDP program for FY 2007– Y 2008 that was designed to provide a broad range of developmental activities coupled with formal training to enhance individual executive competencies and to increase awareness and understanding of public policy, programs, and issues.

In developing the program, USDA identified the number and nature of projected SES vacancies including those in mission critical occupations over the next five years, the number of SES candidates necessary to ensure that these vacancies are filled by highly qualified employees, and the number of employees in USDA who are potentially eligible to participate in the program.

USDA's CDP integrates an orientation module, a 360-degree diagnostic assessment with coaching, an individual needs assessment, an executive action plan (Individual Development Plan), a developmental assignment, and SES Mentoring with core development training at American University. The American University training consists of eight graduate level courses over a 16-month period which, when successfully completed, provides 12 graduate level credits that may be used toward a Master's degree in Public Administration.

Selection into the program was competitive. The application process progressed through five phases with each phase asking applicants to demonstrate selected competencies. Only the highest rated applicants from each phase progressed to the next phase. Candidates who successfully complete the program and are certified by OPM will be eligible for noncompetitive appointment into SES positions for which they are otherwise qualified. Seventy-eight candidates were selected to participate in three "classes". The first class will complete its study in the fall of 2008 with the third class finishing in June of 2009.

## **RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Rural Development (RD) has used the following systematic process to design, develop, implement, and evaluate training and development programs for its leaders at the GS-13 through SES levels:

- Results from the 2007 Training Needs Assessment Survey were reviewed to identify gaps. The results revealed a need to build and/or improve in five competency areas: (1) ability to assess health care needs and trends in a community; (2) ability to review financial statements; (3) ability to provide solutions for unusual or complex cases that require innovative approaches; (4) knowledge of health/sanitation requirements, taxes and insurance issues, laws, regulations, environmental controls, legal instruments, and procedures for purchasing and selling property in the assigned area; and (5) ability to evaluate, plan, and analyze processes and techniques (quantitative and qualitative) for delivering the Community Programs in areas such as underwriting, performance measures, and allocation management;
- Curricula have been planned to support RD's workforce in these competency areas. RD is currently linking courses to each of these competencies and identifying the recommended courses in each curriculum. The curricula will be comprised of e-learning courses, customized to RD's needs. These courses may be comprised of a variety of media using on-line, mentoring/shadowing assignments, instructor-led training, and webinars;
- RD's developmental marketing strategy includes announcements of course curricula, newsletters, use of the Intranet training portal website and memoranda to managers informing them of the mission area's plan to address its workforce training and development needs. RD informs all newly appointed State Directors of the e-learning initiative during Orientation Training; and
- The results from the leadership competency assessment indicated that the major area of emphasis for training this year is performance management. Therefore, strategies are being developed to close gaps in this area.

## **RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS**

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Research, Education and Economics (REE) will continue to utilize agency-specific leadership development programs designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required to effectively achieve the mission area's strategic goals. In addition to the programs administered by the individual REE agencies, all agencies routinely participate in management and leadership programs sponsored by various Federal Government and external groups, including the following:

- Government-wide SES CDPs;
- OPM's Management Development Center Programs and the Federal Executive Institute; and
- USDA Graduate School Leadership Development Programs.



## AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

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The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) will continue to administer the following programs:

- *The Leadership Evaluation and Development Program (LEDP)*. LEDP develops the agency's future administrative leaders through a 24-month training and development program that is targeted at GS-11 and above administrative personnel. The program consists of developmental assignments, self-development, and a Congressional Briefing Conference. There are seven new participants for FY 2008;
- *The Path to Leadership Program (PLP)*. PLP provides the opportunity to learn about the Agricultural Research Service leadership roles and to develop future leaders. The PLP is a nine-month training and development program targeted at GS-12 and above scientists, managers, section heads, and team leaders. Eleven participants are enrolled in the FY 2008 program, which consists of customized individual development plans suited to each person's development needs. Examples include leadership assessments, detail and stretch assignments, and management and technical training classes;
- *The New Research Leader Training Program (NRLTP)*. NRLTP provides new Research Leaders with the resources and information necessary to meet the challenges and responsibilities of leadership in ARS. The NRLTP is a 24-month training and development program targeted at new ARS Research Leaders. The program consists of a week-long overview of headquarters operations, a three-day HR management orientation, an extensive leadership lab, and a Congressional Briefing Conference. There are approximately 30-40 new Research Leaders participating in the program in any given year; and
- *The Executive Professional Excellence and Knowledge Program (PEAK)*. PEAK develops a competitive pool of culturally diverse, highly qualified employees as potential, future ARS leaders. PEAK is a 24-month training and development program targeted at GS-14s and above. The program includes developmental assignments, self-development assignments, and a Congressional Briefing Conference. The PEAK program did not have an FY 2008 intake due to USDA-sponsored SES CDP. Nine ARS employees are developmental candidates in USDA's current SES CDP.

## COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE

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The Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) will continue to use the following programs:

- *LEAD-21*. In conjunction with its land-grant university partners, CSREES supports Leadership Development for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (LEAD-21). LEAD-21 is intended to meet the future needs for leadership development of participants from the land-grant universities' research, education, and extension program areas as well as CSREES National Program Leaders (NPLs) and other agency personnel at the GS-13 through GS-15 levels who work with the land-grant universities. LEAD-21 is a year-long program with three weeks of classroom training and a 9-month individual leadership learning experience. To date, 13 CSREES employees have been involved in the training with another four scheduled to start the next class in June 2008. More than 40 other CSREES employees completed two similar leadership programs that preceded LEAD-21;

- *State Liaison Program.* In July of 2005, in response to recommendations from its land-grant university partners, CSREES established a new State Liaison Program, with two NPLs assigned to each state. The purpose of the program is to improve communication, enhance collaboration, and strengthen relationships. An important by-product of the program is continuing education for CSREES NPLs in areas related to the issues confronting the land-grant universities. Through their assignments on major campuses, with the charge to facilitate communications between that campus and CSREES, the NPLs are gaining collaboration and communication skills and a diversity of perspectives;
- *Grants Management Certificate Program.* CSREES is continuing development of its GS-1101 mission-critical employees through a three-year Grants Management Certificate Training program. Several CSREES employees are currently participating in the Certificate of Competency in Accounting Program offered by Southeastern University. In 2009, successful participants will complete 27 hours of accounting and qualify for their certificate. These activities help to enhance the capabilities of the CSREES workforce and ensure an adequate pool of trained employees; and
- CSREES employees also participate in a number of other leadership experiences. In addition to the SES CDP, in which the agency has one candidate currently enrolled, and other Federal and non-Federal programs, mentioned above, CSREES also takes advantage of the Embassy Science Fellows program and the Brookings Institution LEGIS Congressional Fellows program.

## NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE

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The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) continues to pursue the following strategies and programs:

- *Succession Candidate Pools.* Two different staff pools are identified to assume leadership positions. The first pool is comprised of GS-14/15 employees who are eligible to apply for SES positions. NASS maintains approximately 145 staff members in this pool, including staff members that are SES-certified. Three NASS candidates are participating in USDA's current SES CDP class. The second pool is comprised of GS-13 employees who are eligible to apply for GS-14 positions. Approximately 238 staff members are in this pool, of which, 26 are currently in management positions;
- *Annual Training Needs Assessment.* The Training and Career Development Office conducts a training needs assessment annually. In July 2007, the Agency Human Resources Council met and approved the FY 2008 Training Plan that includes events in the areas of technical, leadership, inter-personal communications, and career development;
- *Mandatory Leadership/Supervisory Training.* NASS employees in the statistician and IT professional job series receive 80 hours of mandatory leadership and supervisory training prior to being selected into management positions. The first training program includes an annual 40-hour workshop entitled the "Leadership Academy." Twenty-four months after attending the Leadership Academy, employees attend "Introduction to Supervision" offered through the USDA Graduate School. Individual employees are selected to attend these programs each fiscal year;
- *Full-Time Training Programs (FTT).* Developed in 1960 and held at various universities in conjunction with NASS state offices, FTT is designed to provide advanced technical

and leadership training to employees. The FTT programs are one-year in length and targeted to employees at the GS-11 through 13 levels. The programs include advanced technical training and developmental work assignments designed to develop greater technical skills and technical leadership attributes;

- *Career Development Intern Program (CDI)*. CDI is designed to provide technical leaders for NASS' national statistical programs. CDI is a one-year program targeted to employees at the GS-11/12 levels. The program provides technical, communication, and leadership sessions together with work experiences designed to develop Headquarters technical statistical national program leaders; and
- *AgLearn*. NASS was one of the first USDA agencies to adopt USDA's AgLearn system to better manage employees' training and to identify their needs more efficiently.

## **MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS**

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The Marketing and Regulatory Program agencies have instituted specialized leadership and development programs designed to develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities required to effectively achieve the mission area's strategic goals. Agency-specific training and development strategies follow.

**ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE (APHIS)** training and development activity encompasses a variety of training courses and other programs relating to employee leadership development, including:

- APHIS Leadership Development Programs (Tracks I and II);
- New Supervisory training – Fundamentals of APHIS Human Resource Management curriculum;
- A new course for prospective managers entitled "So You Think You Want to Be a Supervisor;"
- Several program-specific training curricula including the Biotechnology Regulatory Services Management Development Program, Plant Protection and Quarantine's Leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Veterinary Sciences Leadership Development Program; and
- The USDA Graduate School, OPM's Management Development Center Programs, the New Leader Program, the Executive Leadership Program, the Executive Potential Program, and various OPM SES Forums and Federal Executive Board offerings.

Additional program-specific training activities are carried out by Veterinary Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Wildlife Services, and International Services. These efforts provide personnel with scientific, leadership, and technical training to meet the needs of their respective programs, employees, and customers.

In response to data from a recently conducted organizational assessment survey, APHIS is currently engaged in a broad initiative to improve supervisory effectiveness. This effort has focused on examining and revamping the processes by which supervisory personnel are selected, evaluated, and rewarded.

**GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS, AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION (GIPSA)** offers the following succession planning related training programs:

- *The Leadership Development Program (LDP)*. LDP uses a competitive announcement and selection process to identify approximately 25-35 participants. The program provides an interactive forum through which participants explore practical and conceptual methods for more effectively managing the issues, challenges, and opportunities facing them in the everyday workplace. Participants develop products and processes that have direct application to their work. The LDP is tied to OPM's Executive Core Qualifications and 27 leadership competencies;
- GIPSA-specific training modules address official agency standards, authorizing laws and regulations, and technical competencies. The program focuses on five personal dimensions:
  - Personal effectiveness, demonstrated through cognitive skills, relating to others, and personal capabilities and characteristics;
  - Discipline, demonstrated through a broad understanding of the agency's work, maintaining credibility, communication, and advocacy;
  - Business acumen, demonstrated through comprehension of policy, organizational structure, interpersonal relations, and alignment of work to GIPSA strategy;
  - Managing information and knowledge, demonstrated through information technology and knowledge management, and
  - Leading and managing change, demonstrated through leading and managing change, people, and work; and
- The USDA Graduate School, OPM's Management Development Center Programs, the New Leader Program, Executive Leadership Program, Executive Potential Program, and various OPM SES Forums and Federal Executive Board offerings.

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## **AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE**

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The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) currently offers the following training and leadership development programs:

- Technical training in grading and classing standards through the various commodity programs – Cotton, Dairy, Livestock & Seed, Fruit & Vegetable, and Poultry;
- Technical training in Food Defense and International Organization for Standardizations (ISO) 9000;
- Non-technical training including new employee orientation, supervisory training, conflict resolution, communication skills, and leadership and executive development;
- Non-technical training, through a Career Learning Program, that includes formal training and developmental assignments in competencies critical for success;
- Performance indicators were developed for entry, full performance, and executive levels for both field and headquarters employees;
- Management development targeted at employees at the GS-11 through 13 levels; and
- Executive development targeted at employees at the GS-14 through SES levels.

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## **FARM AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE**

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The Farm and Foreign Agricultural Service (FFAS) utilizes the following methods for training employees and future leaders:

- Online learning including the AgLearn leadership development courses; and
- Executive development programs including the:
  - Aspiring Leader Program;
  - LEGIS Fellows Program;
  - Congressional Fellows Program;
  - Executive Leadership Program;
  - Executive Potential Program;
  - Federal Executive Institute Program;
  - Mike Mansfield Fellowship;
  - New Leader Program; and
  - USDA Graduate School Courses and Programs.
- *Competitive Leadership Development Training Program (LDP)*. LDP is designed for employees who have not served in a supervisory position. The curriculum was developed in partnership with FSA and RMA management to prepare participants to compete more effectively for leadership positions, should vacancies occur. LDP is a one-year program with a curriculum grounded in the Executive Core Qualifications developed by OPM as a profile of leadership success in the Federal Government; and
- *“Invitation to Excellence: Leading in FSA”*. This program is a customized, comprehensive leadership development program primarily targeted to new supervisors in the headquarters organization. The program curriculum is designed to address the “art of leadership” and the OPM leadership competencies and includes 20 modules on such topics as transitioning to the supervisory role, employee engagement, developing employees, creating a culture of recognition, managing difficult conversations, personal influence, and political savvy.

## FOREST SERVICE

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The Forest Service views creation of a strong pool of candidates for future senior leadership positions as one of its top priorities. Its senior leadership team has been intricately involved in the creation and operation of programs to create this pool, including:

- *The Senior Leader Development Program*. This comprehensive, year-long program prepares candidates for the challenges of executive positions and focuses on OPM’s leadership competencies. The program was launched in FY 2005 with a class of 40 participants and expanded in FY 2006 with 74 participants;
- *The Middle-Leader Development Program*. This program will address one of the Forest Service’s most critical leadership issues - an inadequate pool of well-qualified candidates at the GS-11 and GS-12 levels for district ranger and similar positions. Assuming approval of the program proposal, the design will be finalized in early FY 2009;
- *Competitive Leadership Development Programs*. The Forest Service actively participates in programs offered by external sources such as the LEGIS development program offered by the Brookings Institute. In FY 2007, 64 employees attended leadership development programs outside of the Forest Service representing an 8% increase over FY 2006;
- *A National Supervisory Curriculum*. The Forest Service has developed a curriculum designed to provide supervisors and managers the skills required to succeed on the job. This curriculum includes Practical Leadership Skills for New Supervisors, Human



Resources Management: What Supervisors and Managers Need to Know, and Leadership Skills for Experienced Supervisors and Managers. The latter is a newly developed course that is still being piloted. A total of 733 students were reached by these courses;

- *Leadership and Development Opportunities for the Field Offices.* These opportunities ranged from full-scale leadership development programs to courses designed to address particular leadership competencies; and
- *Automated Assessment System.* The Forest service is in the process of developing an automated assessment system that will enable employees to assess themselves on their leadership competencies and take action to address skill gaps.

## **FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE**

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The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) has developed a comprehensive leadership development program beginning at the pre-supervisory level and extending through the senior level. In addition to using the Federal Executive Institute program, the agency has developed the following specific leadership programs:

- *The Leadership Potential Program (LPP).* LPP provides basic leadership skills and competency training. LPP is a six-month training and development program targeted at GS-9 through 13 non-supervisory employees. The program consists of developmental residential training and on-line learning, 360-degree and behavioral assessments with feedback, individual development plans, critical thinking/creative problem solving/decision making, conflict management, and negotiation skills;
- *The Basic Supervisory Training for In-Plant Supervisors (BST).* BST is a one-week residential program that offers basic supervisory survival skills, a blend of regulatory/enforcement aspects of being an in-plant supervisor, and other supervisory issues relative to performance management, labor/employee relations, and civil rights. BST is geared towards Supervisory Public Health Veterinarians, Supervisory Consumer Safety Inspectors, and Frontline Supervisors with little or no supervisory experience or training. In FY 2007, 154 employees were trained in this program with an additional 140 employees expected to be trained in FY 2008;
- *The New Supervisory Program (NSP).* NSP provides basic supervisory skills development. This 12-week program consists of in-resident and on-line training targeted at employees at the GS-9 through GS-14 levels in supervisory, team leader, and project management positions. The program consists of competency-based development, developmental work assignments, a 360-degree assessment with feedback, individual coaching, experiential team building, effective briefings, career development training and human resources policies and guidelines;
- *The Annenberg Leadership Institute.* The Annenberg Leadership Institute is a new Leadership Development Program being piloted in FY 2008. This program is for mid-level GS-13 and GS-14 employees who are not yet supervisors or new supervisors. The Annenberg Leadership Institute is a nine-month program that provides agencies with an avenue for addressing a critical project while developing the leadership capabilities of aspiring leaders. Annenberg Fellows have the opportunity to work on this high-impact project while also attending a series of classroom seminars and one-on-one coaching sessions. Employees from FSIS and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will work with their agencies' senior leaders to strengthen interagency coordination and public

communications during food recalls. Five high-potential, mid-level employees from each agency will work together to develop innovative, timely, consistent, and effective food safety communication strategies. Throughout the process, FSIS and FDA will work together to improve information-sharing between agencies and unify communications at dual jurisdiction facilities;

- *Frontline Supervisor Training (FLST)*. FLST provides leadership and professional development opportunities and strengthens communications skills and networking opportunities. FLST is a three-day residential training program targeted at employees at the GS-13 through 15 levels. The program consists of intensive science-based training and team as well as individual development activities. In 2007, four classes were held and 260 frontline supervisors and state inspector/supervisors completed the FLST course. This program plans to have the same number of participants in 2008;
- *The Leadership Assessment Development Program (LADP)*. LADP provides employees with supervisory experience and new skills and insights that focus on agency and management issues. LADP is a four-week residential program targeted at employees at the GS-13 through GS-15 levels with at least two years of managerial or team leader experience. The program consists of competency-based training, a 360-degree assessment with feedback and individual coaching, as well as team developmental assignments, simulations and benchmarking “Best Practices.” Twenty-five employees completed a year long LADP session in 2007. In 2008, this program will increase from three to four sessions;
- *The Executive Leadership Coaching Program (ELCP)*. ELCP provides employees with an effective coaching relationship and determines executive quality strengths and areas for development. ELCP is targeted to employees at the GS-14 level and above and consists of fifteen hours of individualized coaching with outside professionals with both public and private sector experience. Forty-seven employees participated in the program during FY 2007. FSIS will continue to offer the coaching services during FY 2008;
- *Emotional Intelligence for Leaders (EIL)*. EIL consists of a pre-session BarOn EQI assessment (taken by each program participant), a two-day formal training session and an optional offering of up to ten hours of coaching. This program is typically divided into two tracks: Track 1 for GS-13 through GS-15 level employees and Track 2 for GS-7 through GS-12 level employees. Thirty-two employees participated in this program in FY 2007 and another 25 are expected to participate in FY 2008;
- *The SES Forum Series*. These forums identify resources for successful strategic leadership, assist with career and personal development, and improve leadership and communications skills. The series consists of six half-day forums targeted at SES employees and GS-15 candidates. Nine FSIS employees were selected from USDA’s 2007 SES CDP. FSIS will continue to offer senior-level development through the Federal Executive Institute, Executive Coaching, and the SES Forum Series; and
- *The Legacy Program*. The Legacy Program is a knowledge management pilot program. This program has just completed a needs assessment process to identify the high priority, “at risk” knowledge for two program areas in FSIS. In 2008, this program will proceed to capture this “at risk” knowledge. The implementation of this program will support FSIS’s strategic goals.

## FOOD, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SERVICE

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The Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNCS) offers the following training and leadership developmental opportunities:

- *FNS University (FNSU)*. FNSU is the primary source of professional and personal growth opportunities for FNCS employees. All training programs are competency-based and include, but are not limited to, the Leadership Institute, nationwide corporate Learning Labs, the Supervisory Excellence Program, the Field Academy, and the Tuition Reimbursement Program;
- *Formal Mentoring Program*. The agency is developing a formal mentoring program that will be available to all employees regardless of position or organizational location. The program is designed to help manage change and ensure continuity of operations and the future success of the Agency. A pilot was completed in the Mid-Atlantic region and is currently under evaluation. Initial implementation is planned for the National Office with nationwide implementation following; and
- *The Career Enhancement Program (CEP)*. CEP is designed to provide an array of opportunities to assist employees in achieving their goals at any stage of their career. CEP is currently comprised of three major components – the Career Counseling Program, through which certified career counselors assist employees with their long-term career planning; the Job Enrichment Program which provides employees with cross-training opportunities; and the Aspiring Leaders Program which, when fully developed, will provide developmental opportunities for employees at the GS-5 to GS-11 grade levels who wish to acquire leadership capabilities.